

NOTES on some ISLANDS of the NEW HEBRIDES.

By Lieutenant BOYLE T. SOMERVILLE, R.N.

[WITH PLATES I., II.]

THE New Hebrides group of islands, lying about 2,000 miles to the eastward of Northern Australia, are at present but slightly known either to the navigator or to the scientific investigator.

Discovered by Captain Cook in the latter part of the last century, and only visited at intervals since then by kidnappers, sandalwood cutters, bêche-de-mer fishers, and latterly by "labour vessels" and traders, it is scarcely surprising that the existing surveys of these islands are of the most sketchy description, and the information concerning their inhabitants a record of blood and evil deeds.

Owing therefore to the great uncertainty of their position, and the increasing traffic during recent years, both of men-of-war and merchant vessels, it was at length decided to make a systematic marine survey; and to this end H.M.S. "Dart" was dispatched, in June, 1890, to begin operations there at the island of Efate. During the surveying seasons—June to December—of 1890 and 1891 in these parts while serving in the "Dart," I made a few notes concerning the peoples of the islands we visited; but I am largely indebted to Mr. Macdonald, of Havannah Harbour, Efate; to Mr. Michelsen, of Tongoa Island; and to Mr. Gillan, of Uripiv Island, off the coast of Malekula Island—all Presbyterian missionaries, the two former resident on now Christian islands, and the latter on an absolutely heathen one—for much of what hereafter appears.

Their intimate knowledge of the natives, and especially of their languages, renders them entirely reliable sources of information concerning these Oceanians, both in their savage and civilized conditions.

It should be borne in mind, however, that the habits of the natives of close-lying islands sometimes vary extraordinarily; so I must premise that all my notes refer to quite a small portion of the group—namely, Efate Island, the Shepherd Islands, and the east coast of Malekula. Outside these limits I cannot give any information; but will only mention that my account of "Narak" in the island of Tanna—some miles south of our field of work—was taken almost at word of mouth from Rev. W. Gray, the missionary resident at Weasisi, on the occasion of our visit there in 1890, bound to Sydney.

Let me, then, without further preface, begin by describing, as far as I can, the rules of society which still obtain in the non-Christian parts.

Social Customs.

In considering the social customs of the islands we visited, it should be remarked that the Christian natives have absolutely and violently changed their old habits of life. They who were once dirty, naked, licentious, polygamous cannibals are now quite the reverse, and very earnest believers in the Christian religion besides. Beyond the general condemnation stated above, I am unable to say what their various peculiarities were; I glean, however, the following from Mr. Macdonald's book "*Oceania*," with regard to his converts of Efate, on the subject of family relationship and degrees of affinity, which still exist in a modified form. I have reason to believe that the same customs are found in all the islands we visited, but have obtained no certain knowledge on this point.

When a man desires to marry—a mere payment of pigs for a woman—his wife is invariably chosen from another tribe. Their children belong to this, the *mother's*, tribe, and consequently the father does not take the same interest in them that, as we think, he naturally should, but rather devotes himself to his sister's children—who, of course, are, therefore, his own tribesmen—on whom, if he has any property to leave at his death, he bestows it, his own children being looked after by *their* uncle; thus matters right themselves, however unnatural it may seem. This is, of course, the result of polygamy, and, in such a condition of life, one can imagine it being very convenient.

It has also been supposed to exist on the score of polyandry; or, perhaps on account of looseness of life on the part of the wives, where the paternity of the children became doubtful. In the first case, however, there is no record of polyandry having ever been practised; indeed it would be looked on in the present day with repugnance; and in the second, considering the extraordinary jealousy of husbands (in the islands we visited, at all events)—and the vendetta that invariably follows an adulterer to his death—this theory seems to me a mistaken one.

A child calls all his uncles on both sides, "father"; all his aunts, "mother"; and his first cousins, "brother" or "sister"; in fact, one rarely hears one person call another by his given name; and often the ridiculous sight may be seen of a man calling a small girl, much younger than himself, "mother." This makes it necessary to enquire who a man's *real* father or mother is.

Thus, at the beginning of things, the members of a tribe—all by name "brothers" and "sisters," children of the originating mother of the tribe—were considered so nearly related, that marriage within tribal limits came to be looked upon as incest, and to be punished with death. This idea still obtains; although the reason for it has, of course, become lost: and no doubt it has been very beneficial to the health and vigour of the various races, by preventing close intermarriages.

We may now leave Efate and visit heathenry in the small but populous islet of Uripiv, lying off the north end of Malekula: for the greater part of the following information concerning it Mr. Gillan, missionary at that place, is responsible.

The most noticeable features of domestic life here will be found in the curious segregation of sexes, and the superstitious dread of eating anything female. Women are degraded to the level of brute beasts, doing all the hard field work, and being made to carry loads which appear quite disproportionate to their ugly-shaped bodies and thin legs.

Let us follow an Uripiv man from cradle to grave, and see how these savages live their life.

A few days after birth a killing of pigs takes place, and the child is, as we would say in the Navy, "rated a man." Henceforward he must cook his own meals at his own fire, and eat with men alone, otherwise death would mysteriously fall upon him. The fact of his being suckled, however, which often goes on for two years, is quite overlooked. The women dislike bearing children, as they are so much in the way while they are at work in the fields, and heavy to carry about; so that, of twins, one is always neglected and starved till it dies; while a female child, if the population is thought to be getting too high, is treated in a similar manner—simply left to itself, uncared for, till it dies.

Circumcision takes place between the ages of five and ten. As far as I know, pig-killing accompanies this function, which is looked on as necessary to the continuance of the race. Before it takes place the boy goes naked; but afterwards he is costumed like the remainder of the men.

The naming of a boy is an occasion of much solemnity, and gives opportunity for a great pig feast. Usually several go through the ceremony, which consists principally in the seclusion of the candidates in a special fenced-round hut, where they must remain for periods of from 10 to 100 days.

During this seclusion the young man is known as "duli," and must neither wash nor see the face of a woman, and his meals are handed in all ready cooked for him. At the end of this chrysalis stage he emerges under his given name.

During lifetime he often changes his name, always under these rules; and after such a change it is both a great offence, and unlucky, to address him by his previous one. The change is always accompanied by a large payment of pigs by the candidate to the old men who arrange these matters (though the whole village enjoy the feast), and it is considered a highly "swagger" thing to be rich enough to afford it. I have not discovered what rules govern the number of pigs and the length of the "duli," nor if there is any superiority of one name over another, but I suppose that such exists.

Names are sometimes sacred, and as such are not allowed to be pronounced by the owner; it is always advisable therefore to ask a third person what another man's name is.

After large religious pig feasts new names are often given—as it might be "birthday honours"—to those who have been instrumental in giving and arranging them. A case of this occurred while we were at Uripiv, when the chiefs of the entertaining village went into "duli" for a period of thirty days. It should be added, however, that the "duli" is not very strict; and the young men undergoing it have no superstitious dread of breaking it through in some particulars, but do not let the old men of the village see them do so, for it is they who institute and keep the custom alive.

The next occasion in the young man's life is, probably, the investing of the belt. This latter is a broad band of nutmeg bark about six inches wide, which encircles the waist twice and is confined by a small strip of plaited grass bound outside it and knotted. An underneath strip of grass cloth or calico supports the very scanty clothing of these natives, so the belt itself may be considered as purely an ornament.

It corresponds pretty nearly to the "toga virilis," though it is frequently, and indeed usually, not attained (perhaps through lack of pigs) until a man is 19 or 20, or even older: it is never worn until after puberty is reached.

The obtaining of a wife is accompanied by many visits of arrangement and betrothal, pigs being presented on each occasion. The wife may actually cost—her net price, that is—from 10 to 20 pigs, according to her capabilities as a worker in the yam-patch (and perhaps beauty); but the whole cost to a husband, including his visiting and betrothal gifts, is seldom less than fifty.

Whenever opportunity offers, the youth, usually before marriage, goes to do three years' labour in Queensland on the sugar plantations. In Malekula this is considered as giving the true "*cachet*" of style to a man's education: and those who are too young to go, or having grown old have never been, will

usually pretend that they have, and vigorously learn up as much broken English as possible in order to let the "white men" think so. Some of them speak remarkably well; and altogether we surveyors found it a most useful accomplishment; those who had had experience of English masters being of great value as guides, carriers of baggage, and buyers of curios for us: in fact we never found them anything but friendly, and usually proud to serve us—of course for recompense of "tabak" (tobacco).

When old age and decrepitude arrives, the Malekulan has nothing to look forward to but burial alive. Should an old man (or old woman) become bedridden, or too enfeebled to look after him- or her- self, he is told, quite simply, that his burial will occur on such a day. Invitations to the funeral feast are then sent out; and, dead or not dead, on that date the unhappy person is buried. On very rare occasions he is, if still living at the time of his funeral, strangled. Mr. Gillan, the missionary before mentioned, told me that he knew of an old man who had been buried alive no less than three times. He had been strong enough to force his way out of his 12-inch deep grave, and then reappeared in the village. However, he was reckoned a dead man; and, as such, no one would give him food and, as his own property had been divided by his successors, he could get none of what had been his own. They buried him a second time, and again he reappeared; until at last on his third interment he died, too weak to continue resistance.

We were able to prevent the living burial of an old man who had been bedridden for six months; but, as he died somewhat suddenly on the same night, I have no doubt he was strangled. The extraordinary thing is that those who are nearest to the grave themselves are the most clamorous for the continuance of this barbarous custom. The young are by no means anxious for it.

At Aulua, a small mission station only twenty miles from Uripiv, where the customs just recounted are in force, the following practices, which appear to me a mere extension of the Uripiv ones, are in vogue. I believe, but am not certain, that they also extend to Port Sandwich, fifteen miles farther south, but I never could get the natives there to tell me about themselves.

Here *mankind* is divided into ten castes, as one may call them, corresponding to age in life; and it is in the state of rising a caste that the "duli" period occurs; probably a new name is given at the same time. The place of "dulis" is invariably a large fenced-in place on the dancing ground, and though the periods of isolation are shorter they are far stricter. The members of each caste mess together, and may not take

their meals otherwise, they also sleep together (when single): thus differing from the Uripiv people, where one "Man's House" does duty for the whole village.

With regard to women, they of course receive names in their youth in order to distinguish them, but there is no function with pigs or feasting, until, having arrived at a marriageable age, they are sold to the highest bidder. The little girls, like the boys, go naked until they are about five years old, when they adopt the woman's dress, an exceedingly scanty strip of pandanus fibre matting folded round the loins. They learn in their girlhood all that fits them to be man's slave and toiler in the fields, and also the arts of mat-making and weaving, at which they are very expert. They are sold into marriage at about fifteen, already showing signs of toil, though passably goodlooking; but four or five years later, having borne perhaps two children, they are little short of hags, with stooped frame and pendulous breasts; and so remain, getting more and more wrinkled and grey, until old age and probably living burial fall on them.

On marriage, a woman's identity sinks *absolutely*, even as far as losing the name by which she previously went. She has then *no name*. She is simply "the woman belonging to such a man." The husband can do what he please with his wife, his chattel, even to killing her, without fear of outside resentment. No brother or male relative would seek vengeance, as they would in the case of a man murder. In spite of the fact that nine out of every ten cases are apprehended, women frequently run away from their husbands. They get unmercifully thrashed and kicked on their almost inevitable return, yet they often risk it. In such case, the "co-respondent" is sought for also by the husband and his friends, and if possible killed.

Women often go to Queensland as "labour," their fathers parting with them to the recruiting officer for consideration and value received. They are said to be much better workers than the men and more easily governed. They always offer the final attraction to half-hearted recruits among the men-natives to take a passage to Queensland on board a labour ship; and as such are much sought after by recruiters.

As far as I know, a widow reverts to her own tribe at her husband's death, and of course may marry again. Probably they have then some voice in the matter, as I knew one old lady at Uripiv who was a person of great consideration, widow of a chief, who lived independently, covered with beads and armlets, and at the dances painted her face like a man and danced with the best of them.

Chiefs.

I was never able to accurately gauge the actual power and position of chiefs. In the Christian islands (by virtue of the missionaries) they are certainly of some consideration; probably on account of having reduced their number to only one to each village or tribe, and thus increased their prestige; but in Malekula there are numbers of chiefs, so-called, who have no authority to speak of, and certainly no dignity. They are distinguished above the remainder by wearing a bangle, pig's tusk, or bead, on the left arm; which, when made of beads, generally has a conventional face or "demits" on it, everybody else wearing theirs on the right arm. The chieftaincy is procurable by the payment of pigs for a feast, and thus is open to any who can afford it. I remember a small boy of about ten years of age who was a chief at Uripiv.

They certainly do not understand being made answerable for the ill-doing of their "subjects," and look upon themselves as very injured persons when so compelled by men-of-war.

In the Christian islands, on the other hand, they are beginning to feel like responsible men, though I have no doubt that formerly they were just the same as the chiefs of the still heathen islands, submerged in the barbarous condition of socialism, and quite unable to institute order, or command obedience, being not a bit better than their so-called "subjects." It is most noticeable that as the type of humanity in these islands improves, so the power of the chiefs improves also; this may be seen particularly in Fiji and Samoa, where far higher types are found than in the New Hebrides; and there the chiefs almost constitute a nobility.

In the Shepherd group and at Mai, which adjoins it, it was their extraordinarily intelligent custom to nominate the new chief some time before the death of the old one, so that on this latter's demise, the successor should be already settled on his throne, and well versed in the arts of governance. A party of us from the "Dart" accompanied the missionary (Mr. Michelsen) upon one occasion, at the crowning of a young chief. It was in its way a most impressive function; here were gathered together all the remaining chiefs of the island, five in number, and here were also about three hundred people, who, ten years before, were described as "treacherous cannibals," and were continually fighting, killing, and eating one another; but now clean, clothed, and in perfect amity, collected to assist at the elevation of the sixth chief. We white men-of-war people marched in procession with the chiefs, and had seats in what was the chancel of the big church schoolhouse of the village.

After prayers and hymns the old chief, who was giving up office, stood up, and placing the fingers of his right hand first on his own eyes and then on the head of the new man said, "Be thou Ti-Makati, God help you." Then all the remaining chiefs, joining hands with the old and the new one, stood in a circle with the missionary in the middle, and prayers were offered. The ceremony being concluded with a sermon and hymns, the earth ovens were opened, and soon the whole gathering were feasting on baked pig, the meat their soul loveth; while fowls prepared in the same way were our portion. It was a most pleasant and interesting ceremony.

It should be said that the chief usually takes his crowned name from the village of which he is master, in this instance Makati. "Ti" corresponds pretty nearly to "The," as chieftains in Ireland are styled, and in this case the whole name ludicrously resembles "The MacCarthy."

Religion.

As far as one can judge, it would appear as if at one time the religion of the New Hebrides group, certainly as regards the islands we surveyed, had been the same throughout. Segregation by island and village, aided by the fertile savage imagination, has altered the cult to some extent, but the fundamental religion was undoubtedly a worship of stones, some set up for the purpose in "high places," but often the queer-shaped volcanic and coral boulders of the coast in which resided the souls of those gone before. It was, in fact, ancestor-worship. Before proceeding to discuss it, however, I should like to mention an interesting discovery I made on a small volcanic island called Mau, lying off the east coast of Efate. Here I was shown by the natives a large stone lying in a field, on which was rudely carved an undoubted representation of the sun and of the moon; the former circular, about 18 inches in diameter; and the latter an ogee cut square at the top, also about 18 inches long. The natives said that they represented the sun and moon, and that "ole fella man e makum"; they certainly appeared to be very ancient. In the same field was another stone, set up like a small gravestone; and, as it leaned over, its carved face had not become so weather-worn as that of the other; on it was what I take to represent a skull. As these stones were of a hard volcanic nature, and, as such, certainly could not have been carved with the old shell and stone axes of pre-Christian days; and as, further, their worship-stones never, as far as I saw, bore representations of the sun or moon, this appears to point to an earlier civilization, from

which these people have degraded in the same way as their language seems to have done.

With regard to their present worship (in the heathen islands) and to the original beliefs of the now Christian ones, the after-death hypotheses were these:—

In Efate (Mr. Macdonald says) the soul had to pass through six stages of existence, after which it died altogether. At the earthly death it arrived at the gate of Hades, which was situated at the west extremity of the island, at a place called Tukituki ("the very ancient"), and there encountered "Seritau," the cannibal executioner, and his assistants, Vaus ("question") and Maki ("don't know"). If it could not reply satisfactorily to these officials, it was handed over to Maseasi ("cutter out"), who cut its tongue out, split its head open, and twisted its head back side foremost. "Seritau" was the name of the man who in old cannibal days cut up the bodies for the feast, and therefore the divine representative of this person was looked on as the infliker of the extreme penalty on criminals. In Efate two kinds of people were allowed to pass unharmed into Hades: those belonging to a certain tribe called Namtaku (a sort of yam), and those who had printed, or graven, or branded, on their bodies certain marks or figures (tattooed) called "mitiri" and "keikei."

In Malekula, the soul only dies three times in Hades; each time getting more ethereal, and finally fading out altogether. In its first state, that is immediately after earth life, it inhabits a region 30 miles below the surface of the ground, where it still bears a semi-corporeal existence; and to which region the sacred men have often been on a visit, and consequently know all about it. Here the dead order the affairs of earth, and punish with death those who transgress; especially in the matter of keeping them provided with pigs, etc. (whose ghosts they nourish themselves on), which are consequently sacrificed to them from time to time by their descendants. The souls enjoy this existence for thirty years, and then comes the second death, and so on as mentioned above.

The soul in this condition is known under the name of "Temate" (Aneityeum), "Natamata" (Efate), "tamats" and "demits" in Malekula, and his official hieroglyphic is a conventional face.

With regard to this place I may mention that in Uripiv I obtained a flute of bamboo which bore this, burnt on it, accompanied by a highly-conventional snake, lizard, ray fish (?), and parallel zigzag lines, which I was told meant water. These signs are connected with a flood legend at Aniwa (*vide* Mr. Paton), but I could get no meanings for them at this place.

The face I have seen cicatrized on a man's arm, and it is also on a large egg-shaped piece of hard wood, in my possession, which I take to be a "luckstone." The face is always called "demits," and also occurs, worked in shells or beads, on the chiefs' armlets, as before mentioned.

In consequence of the advent of Christianity I am unable to say whether in Efate "Natamata" was represented in the "high places" by a stone set up, but I am assured that he was by the rocks round the coast. Just to the north of Efate there arises from the sea a strange volcanic pinnacle 400 feet high, from a circular base of about 100 feet diameter; this was regarded as Nawota, the chief; and the native passing in his canoe bowed the head in fear and prayer.

Mr. Mackenzie, a missionary in Efate, showed me some sacred stones, of about the size and appearance of a large curtain ring, apparently made of a dark-coloured limestone, very well and smoothly fashioned, and of a mathematical accuracy of circumference of which I hardly think the existing natives are capable. These were the gods, or luckstones, of three of the villages converted by him; and of which, even in their converted state, they were so afraid as not to consider themselves safe unless they were under Mr. Mackenzie's care and keep.

In Malekula, coral rocks, generally of the slab order, and the more curiously indented by the sea and the coral polype the better, are set up on end with a sloped thatched roof over them, the supports of which were, in one instance I came across, carved to represent a man and a woman. This is placed in the middle of a semicircle, and on either side of it are attendant wooden "demits," each within a house of his own, consisting of a tree or fern tree trunk about six feet high, the top of which has a face of hideous and sometimes ferocious aspect, partly carved and partly shaped in clay, brightly and conventionally coloured. In front of these, as well as of the great stone, is a rude stone altar, like a low table, of one stone supported on two smaller ones. A "demits" stone that I saw at one village had what I take to have been meant for a crescent moon and a rainbow, both painted on it, this being the only instance of a moon I have seen, excepting the ancient carving before mentioned.

In all our islands, worship seems to have been conducted to the music of hollow log gongs. These are fashioned of bread-fruit tree trunks, 8 to 10 feet high, hollowed out, with a long slit down one side, and usually embellished at the top with a rough face. I am assured, however, that no worship was offered to them, much as they resemble idols. These drums are placed on end in a rough circle, over the whole area of which they are planted, leaving just sufficient room for a drummer to each.

Each drum gives a different note when thumped with a big wooden billet, the high notes being supplied by small hollow logs laid horizontally and beaten in brisk syncopated time to the loud boomings of the bigger drums. On a still night they may easily be heard three miles over the water.

On the island of Leleppa, the one heathen spot left in Efate, is a "napea" (as these drums are called), which differs from any I saw elsewhere, being decorated with birds, figures of men, fish, and other devices, besides the usual faces, and coloured brightly as well.

Sacred Men.

I was never able to quite establish the qualities of the Sacred Men, but they undoubtedly exist; I believe it is an hereditary office, which partakes more of the character of wizard and rainmaker than anything else. The religious dances, shortly to be described, were apparently directed by these persons, but no particular reverence seems to be shown to them. While we were in the Shepherd group, the last native to "take the book" (turn Christian) was a sacred man, whose sanctity was such that anything given to him by a white man had to be passed through the hand of a go-between.

In Efate, Mr. Macdonald says, "If a sacred man even passed a village where a death had occurred, or a house where a child had been born, he would immediately take steps to cleanse himself; this he did by a religious ceremony. A cocoanut was split open, and a prayer or incantation said over it, and its water sprinkled or poured over him and his companions. Another mode of purification was to break a forked branch from a particular plant, and, after the necessary prayer or incantation, to draw the branch down the body and limbs, sweeping away the defilement."

Dances.

The dances, generally religious or partly so, take place in the "high place" of demits, of which every village possesses one, generally a large circular or oval clearing in the bush, with the demits in a semicircle down one side and the drums somewhere near the middle. In the dancing ground, or "emil," where the dance I am about to describe took place, there were ten demits of wood, five of which flanked on either side the central great coral stone, whose penthouse roof was supported by an unpainted carving of a man and a woman, while in front of it stood a smaller carved human figure, apparently ambisexual.

Planted round the "emil" were, as usual, croton bushes and dracæna trees, which greatly added to the beauty of the spot. Along the bush track, for about 50 yards before arriving at the ground, were set up quantities of small flat stones like rough gravestones; which were placed, one for every pig that had been sacrificed on the ground.

When a big dance is in prospect, as on this occasion, the demits are screened off by a plaited fence of reed grass, and practices for the ceremony take place there nightly.

We arrived at Uripiv, one evening, to hear that a great feast, a "Maki," was to take place the following day. This is a function which only occurs about once in three years, and as invitations had been sent to friendly villages far and wide, and a large number of pigs—over two hundred—had been collected for the feast, it promised to be very interesting.

As night came on we heard tremendous drummings and singings beginning in the "emil," and, although it was pouring with rain, we decided to go and see what was proceeding. When we arrived at the spot, on emerging from the pitchy dark bush track a most wonderful sight burst upon us. A black and streamy sky lowered over the inky dark shadow of the great trees round the place of gongs; and gathered there were about seventy or eighty men, all nearly naked, who, by the fitful flaring light of blazing reed torches, which each one bore, brandishing about, were performing savage dances and howling savage chaunts to the dinning of the gongs; their black wet bodies glistening in the torchlight as they madly whirled. When our little band of white folk appeared on the scene we were welcomed with a combined screech and shout, and were shown to a place where we might stand and look on at the practice. Bands of about twenty young men, in double file and holding hands, were chaunting to the gong accompaniment, while with their flat feet tapping loudly on the wet ground they swung round the gongs. In the far darkness of the other side we could see all the women standing, their entire faces painted bright red-lead colour. Their turn for dancing came later on, but we were not allowed to see it. "Very good, now you go away," they said, so we went. Not, however, before we had witnessed one ceremony prefatory to the next day's functions. Near the gongs stood a quantity of long bamboos, about 30 feet high, from the tops of each of which hung a large conventional figure of some sea bird, perhaps a frigate bird, with outspread wings. These bamboos had been standing some time as we had noticed them a month or so before; however, now they were seized by a party of men who, to much drumming and singing, gradually

swayed them from side to side, loosening them in the ground and finally increasing the sway, broke them down altogether, and they were then carried away.

Before going we were invited to the "*Maki*" of the morrow, which was to begin at about nine in the forenoon. Natives from all parts were there, having heralded their arrival in their canoes by the blowing of shell conches. All the men engaged in the function were painted with red and black, but not all in one pattern, and all had on their finest grass-matting tassels, "frills," and feather plumes, with which, and branches of croton or hibiscus stuck into their belts behind, they made a brave show.

The women were here as on the previous evening with their faces painted bright red all over and stood apart in a group together.

Affairs commenced by the appearance some distance off of a band of perhaps thirty men chaunting, and advancing in a solid body at a sort of jog-trot, making the feet tell together flatly on the ground at each step, and at the same time snapping their fingers loudly in time to the feet. One native told me that this was to drive away "*debbleum*"—a purification in fact. They pass through the dancing ground and disappear by an opposite bush track.

Shortly following came a second band, who, each carrying a large banana leaf, passed through in similar fashion, but without finger snapping. These prefatory ceremonies being completed the real business of the day began. A large band of drummers manned the gongs, and with unflagging energy kept up a tattoo, not unmusical, while the dancing proceeded.

First, several of the chief and sacred men of the village, whose "*emil*" this was, to the number of seven or eight, formed in a single open file, each armed with a conventional spear, consisting of a long bunch of reeds tufted at the end and much smoke-begrimed. These they poised in the air and caused to quiver while with a curious slow hopping movement (*staccato* on the gongs) they made a series of serpentine curves all about one end of the "*emil*."

While they thus danced, a body of men representing the village whose ground it was appeared, each armed with whatever weapon he could find—bow, spear, club, or musket, tremendously painted up, and each bearing also one large banana leaf. It may be imagined that they presented a highly picturesque appearance. They faced the old chiefs before mentioned, drawn up in a solid square, and sang a savage song of the "*chaunty*" nature, of many verses, each ending in a series of three shouts.

In front of the advancing band were three young girls who had their faces entirely reddened, and wore hanging over their forehead a fringe of snow white fowls' feathers, soft and fluffy, contrasting strongly with their black hair and red faces. Besides their usual waist cloth they wore on either shoulder a small roll of grass matting, dyed magenta, with a deep fringe of fibre tassels about 2 feet long, and they also had on all the shell ornaments, trade bracelets, Turkey red twill, and other finery that they possessed. In one hand they carried a bunch of cocoanuts adorned in the following manner. The plant had been allowed to sprout from the nut to a height of about 3 feet, when the young leaves had been stripped, leaving only the back ridge of each frond, and to these were tied at intervals small fluffy white fowls' feathers. The nut itself had the husk taken off and was painted in concentric black and red rings with a face painted at the end remote from the leaves. Each woman carried two or three of these, which she waved as she danced from one foot to the other.

After some delay and singing from the band, two men advanced carrying a large boar pig whose head had been covered with red paint: they were followed by a small boy, a chief (I believe he was the donor of it), who held a string made fast to the animal. This little procession then ran once round the gongs, which beat a wild and rapid tattoo, and stopping opposite the chiefs placed the pig on the ground. One of the old chiefs launched his (conventional) spear at the pig's side and then, without hesitation, hurled it at the fencing (it nearly hit me on the head as I happened to be standing in the way) at that part which concealed the "demits" to whom the pig was to be sacrificed. The pig was then held by the two men, while a third with a sharp wooden spear (now in my possession) thrust it into the side of the unhappy porker to a depth of 3 or 4 inches. The poor beast was then carried off, the fencing broken down where the spear had struck it, and bundled through to the altar of the "demits," to whom he was sacrificed, and to whose roof post he was then tied up.

This sacrifice was performed until each "demits" had his pig, usually a big one.

Mr. Gillan, the missionary, told me that these pigs would receive no more killing; they were, in fact, conventionally dead; but that when the time came for cooking they would be ripped up for cleaning out without more ado, and that if (as seems probable) the pig was troublesome over this performance, he would be just stunned to keep him quiet with a club or tomahawk. The real cause of death was disembowelling.

When all the "demits" had thus been provided with pigs the presenting village made a circuit of the gongs, dancing and chaunting, and then, seizing some old dried cocoanut leaf thatching, made a small fire with it and dispersed.

As far as I could learn only one village presented to the "demits," but after this presentation several more bands appeared who went through exactly the same functions as the others, accompanied with wild dancing, shouting, and firing of muskets. On these occasions, however, the pigs, much smaller ones, were received by representatives from another village, and were no doubt peace-offerings of some description.

There was no pains taken to spear, even conventionally, the small pigs, they were just taken by the hind legs and had their heads banged on the ground. Each party made a small fire after its presentation and then dispersed.

We did not stay for the cooking and eating of the pigs, but we saw plentiful evidence of it next day in the entrails which covered the island beaches, and by the disgusting lumps of pig meat which were lying in various directions near the "emil," generally in the forks of trees, surplus from the gorge of the previous day. Although such natives as have been in Queensland well understand the cleanliness, humanity, and, above all, convenience, of the European method of slaughtering and dressing pigs, yet they will never take the trouble to practise it. The meat is just torn up anyhow after cooking, and the entrails thrown away.

Some time after the "maki" I was shown at the "emil" by one of the natives, with much pride, the lower jaws of the sacrificed pigs, which with their huge curved tusks are "*tambu*" to the "demits" and cannot therefore be purchased. At one "emil" was a rack, sheltered by a most imposing roof, which was supported by fern tree trunks carved like demits, to which was lashed considerably over one hundred such lower jaws, some with magnificent tusks, one even had two tusks, on one side. I noticed that now since the "sacrificing" all the reed screen in front of the demits had been entirely removed.

For a long time after the feast, drumming and lugubrious chaunts could be heard continuing almost all night, supposed to be in connection with the "maki," but no one, not even themselves I believe, understand their reasons for thus worshipping.

They say that they have no idea why they do it—"Ole fella man befo me, e makeum"—their fathers did it before them, so they continue it, the reason for it being now lost.

At Port Sandwich I witnessed the following "pig paying," differing a good deal to the Uripiv affair just recounted.

The payment of pigs is generally the sign of a peacemaking between two villages who have been in disagreement, and is of common occurrence. In this district the function takes the form of a sort of sham fight in which the village which is going to pay pigs is defeated, thus giving a (conventional) pretext for the payment.

At one end of the "emil" had been constructed a kind of small fence about 30 feet long, formed by sticking ten slight stakes in the ground and interweaving between them banana leaves to a height of 3 feet. The end stakes were croton boughs with the leaves on, and the remaining eight were stripped and had the upper end pointed. On each point was stuck a cocoanut in its husk which was itself adorned with a stiff piece of pandanus fibre about 2 feet long on which white fluffy feathers were tied at intervals, this was stuck into the top of the nut and waved in the wind.

The receiving party occupied this, the fence end of the "emil," and stood about twenty in number all highly and curiously painted in red and black, while several had tiny white feathers stuck at regular intervals over the right hand half of their woolly hair, giving them a most remarkable appearance.

Each was armed with two short stout poles of cotton wood, which were held upright in the hands, and touching one another so as to serve as a shield. The gongs began to beat, gradually increasing in speed and loudness, and as the crescendo was reached the shielded party ran forward holding their shields at arm's length, while looking guardedly from side to side, moving their shields to match, as if on the look-out for a foe, and advanced to the other end of the ground; there being no one there to attack them they then retired bounding in the air and howling.

This continued with scarcely any interval for about a quarter-of-an-hour, when there appeared at the further end the paying party, of equal numbers, but all painted in black only, and looking most diabolical in consequence. Each man carried in his right hand a young cocoanut in its husk of a convenient size for throwing. These advanced on the shielded party with threatening air and when about 10 yards off the front men of the party suddenly wheeled and threw their cocoanuts with the utmost violence at the others. Had these not had shields many would certainly have received severe injury, as the cocoanuts were all quite shattered on the shields, indeed, the accidental blow from a nut on such an occasion, which of course sometimes happens, is a fruitful source of real fighting.

This engagement was renewed three or four times, both parties

shouting and howling, until at last all the cocoanuts were exhausted, and the shielded party gave a shout of triumph. They had conquered. The black faces retired and presently two appeared bearing a fine fat pig. This was taken alive and tied to one of the posts of the little fence before mentioned, and so on until all the stakes had a pig tied to it. When all the pigs had been received, and not even conventionally killed, the old chief of the receiving village first broke down the two croton boughs at the ends of the fence, and then tumbled the cocoanuts off the other posts to which the pigs had been tied. The payers then brought a small sucking pig, killed it by banging its head upon the ground, left it there, and the ceremony was concluded.

Rainmaking.

I never actually witnessed the making of rain, but the following legend reached me from Ambrym, a large island with an active volcano, which closely adjoins Malekula, and is still altogether heathen, or nearly so.

Towards the end of 1890, just after the yam planting, there had befallen an unusually dry season; so an inland tribe of Ambrym went to its rainmaker and said, "Make us rain, or our yams will not grow, and we shall starve." He consented, and straightway set to work to weave a sort of hurdle of the branches and leaves of a tree famed for its rain-producing qualities.

This hurdle being constructed, it was placed, with suitable incantations, at the bottom of what should have been a water-hole in the now dried bed of the mountain torrent, and it was then loaded with heavy stones. Down came the rain in tropical torrents; we, in the "Dart," lying in Port Sandwich, close by, received a full benefit of it, as it never ceased for forty-eight hours, and the entire surface water of the harbour was quite fresh to the depth of three or four inches, and so remained while the tide rose and fell four times.

Soon the dried nullah was a foaming torrent, and the rain-making hurdle ten feet deep in hurrying water; and then to their dismay the people saw that the yams with their surrounding earth were beginning to slide down the hill sides, and would soon be lost altogether.

Now mark what comes of fooling with the elements! No man of the hill country was able to dive to the bottom of the water hole to pull up the hurdle with its weight of stones, so the merciless rain still held on. At last the shore natives, accustomed to swimming and diving, heard what the matter was, and some of them coming to the assistance, the compeller of the

elements was recovered from its watery bed and—the rain stopped!

Narak.

A short account of a species of witchcraft, in constant use among the inhabitants of the populous island of Tanna, may, in conclusion, prove of interest. It is called in the Weasisi dialect "Narak," and curiously resembles the almost world-wide habit of revenge by which the death of an enemy is secretly compassed through making his effigy in wax, sticking it full of pins, and slowly melting it in a fire.

To almost every village in Tanna there is a sacred man, who is hereditarily a Narak burner. Somewhere concealed on his premises, in a spot known only to himself, is a "family" (as they are called) of Narak Stones. One of these "families" was recently accidentally disinterred in his garden by a white trader living on the island. Their existence had been forgotten, but they were immediately recognized as Narak Stones by the natives, who showed the greatest dread of them—so much so, in fact, that they had finally to be sent out of the island, and were deposited in the Melbourne Museum, where, I believe, they now remain. The largest of them, "the father," had upon its surface natural indentations which (to the native eye and imagination only) represented a man squatting on his hams. The others, which were all smaller, were said to resemble parts of the body—an ear, a tibia, and so on; but this resemblance, if any, was quite fortuitous, as none of the stones had ever been touched by a tool.

Such a "family" of stones, then, is concealed in or near the Narak burner's hut, and works revenge on whomsoever their owner wills. The system is as follows: A desires revenge—illness or death—on B. He accordingly manages to obtain some article that has been in close contact with him—the skin of a banana that he has eaten; a cloth which has touched the sweat of his body, etc., which is then carefully rubbed over the leaves and twigs of a certain tree, and is afterwards rolled and bound up with them into a sort of long sausage-shaped affair. A then takes this, the Narak stick, with proper payment, to the Narak burner; who, on coming to terms with A, lights the sacred fire near the stones, and begins to slowly burn the Narak stick.

When the stick begins to be consumed by the fire, B begins to fall ill; and when it has altogether become ashes, he dies.

The missionary assured me that he has only once known Narak-burning to fail: on an occasion when a Christian convert had been the object of revenge, and that the other natives

explained his immunity from it from the fact that Yahova must be the stronger god.

The man who falls ill from Narak-burning may always, by discovering who is burning it, and then paying more than his enemy to the burner, have the Narak stick removed from the fire, and so recover. A white trader living on the island has had his Narak taken twice; on each occasion he has fallen ill, been told by his friends who was burning his Narak, paid to have it removed from the fire—and on each occasion he has recovered.

I can only suggest, in explanation, that when a man falls sick he naturally immediately attributes his illness to Narak-burning, and then biologises himself into getting worse, or paying his fees and recovering, as the case may be.

All the Tannese carry small baskets about with them into which they put banana skins, cocoanut husk, or any refuse from that which they may have been eating; in order to avoid its discovery by an enemy for the purposes of Narak, until reaching and crossing a stream of running water, which alone has the power of annulling Narak. A man who has taken another's Narak will walk round miles to avoid crossing a brook, and thus losing his lately gained power over him.

Narak has so strong a hold in Tanna that all the continual fights and feuds on the island are attributable to it; and while the closely adjoining islands have been Christian for several years, Tanna alone, after sixty years of missionary labour, can only show about half a dozen communicants as a result.

I am glad to be able, in the few preceding notes, to place on record some of the more interesting features of a savagery which, at the present rate of decline in Efate and other islands, seems to point to a complete extinction—either through the introduction of Christianity, or by the present rapid dying out of the inhabitants—at no distant date.

A steamer now runs round the entire group once in a month, connecting at Fila, in the island of Efate, with the Fijian boat running thence to Sydney, and thus to one interested in the ethnology of the very mixed races inhabiting these islands, a large and comparatively unexploited field of no small value to science lies within what is, in these modern days of locomotion, an easy distance.

Explanation of Plates I and II.

PLATE I.

Fig. 1.—A Dancing Ground near Port Sandwich.

Drums in the foreground, and behind them is a "demits" under a thatch roof, made prominent by the tall dead bamboos rising in the background.



FIG. 2.

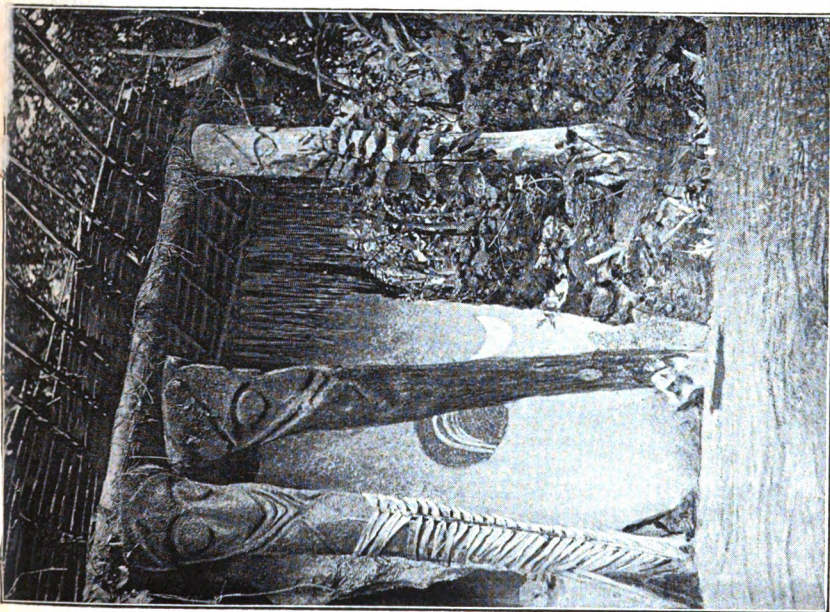


FIG. 1.

On the left is the "tambu house" with two old men sitting in front. Here are kept the "fish" and masks, "tambu hats," used in the dances.

Fig. 2.—A Group of so-called "Mummies."

These represent chiefs gone to the Shades and become "demits." They were brought on board at Port Sandwich, and were said to be from some inland village. The tall one on the left and the next largest have red skulls covered with sun-baked clay to make them look like faces. The body of the large one is made of bamboo frame, wattled and dabbed, and brightly coloured in red, black, and white. He holds in one hand a pig's jaw, and a "fish" in the other. The smallest of all is entirely clay, or rather mud, and twigs, and his head is founded on a cocoanut. The right hand one (with pigs' tusks) is a fern tree stump with a baked mud face, all brightly coloured.

The "fish" (so-called by the natives) is made of wood, and coloured; it is held in the hand while dancing, and was only placed in the mummy's to be photographed.

PLATE II.

Fig. 1.—A "Demits" at Uripiv Island.

With the usual supporters with carved faces—made of fern tree stumps. On the stone a crescent moon and a rainbow (?) in colours.

Fig. 2.—A "Demits" at Uripiv Island.

The stone is the "demits" and the attendant figures—a man on the left of the photo, a woman on the right, and (I fancy) an ambi-sexed creature in the centre are, as far as I could learn, accessories and supporters to the coral stone, which is the real object of worship.

NICOBAR POTTERY.

By E. H. MAN, C.I.E.

[WITH PLATE III.]

REGARDING the origin and manufacture of pottery by the Nicobarese, no traditions are seemingly extant, but a belief exists that in remote ages the Great Unknown, whom in later times they were taught by the missionaries to call Deuse, decreed that on pain of certain serious consequences—such as an earthquake or sudden death—the manufacture of pots was to be confined to the one small island of the group known to us as "Chowra," and that the entire work of preparing the clay and moulding and firing the pots was to devolve on the women of the community: it is further related that many years ago a Chowra woman while on a visit in one of the central islands thoughtlessly acted in contravention of the prohibition and attempted to make a cooking pot, but she forthwith paid the penalty of her